



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE CIVIL ENGINEER SUPPORT AGENCY

20 Dec 00

MEMORANDUM FOR HQ AFCESA/CEOT

FROM: HQ AFCESA/CEX
139 Barnes Drive Suite 1
Tyndall AFB FL 32403-5319

SUBJECT: Semi-Annual Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) Review

1. Request you take action to increase AFSC 3E7X1 (fire protection specialist) SRB multiple from 1.5 to 2 in Zone A and increase the Zone B multiple from 1 to 2. Additionally, it is critical we take immediate action to establish an SRB for Zone C fire protection personnel. We recommend the Zone C multiple should be established at 1.

2. The staffing level of the fire protection career field (3E7X1) has reached a critical stage, and the ability of the career field to fulfill AEF and home station mission requirements has steadily declined. Immediate action is needed to provide an incentive to the personnel to attract reenlistments to sustain the career field. The overall staffing of the career field has dropped to 85% (over 550 personnel short). Three level staffing is at 79% and total 5 level staffing is at 85%. During FY00 the career field continued to suffer significant losses due to poor reenlistment rates:

FY00 – 3E7X1 Retention Data:

	<u>Eligible</u>	<u>Reenlisted</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>AF Goal</u>	<u>Net Loss</u>
First-Term:	580	171	29.48%	55%	- 409
Second-Term:	133	71	53.38%	75%	- 62
Career:	229	189	82.53%	95%	- 40
3E7X1 Total:	942	431			- 511

3. It is crucial that we continue the fight to improve our retention rates for Air Force firefighters. We cannot afford to continue losing potential career candidates by reducing any of the incentives we have available to help keep these highly qualified personnel. We have not significantly improved our retention of eligible personnel in all zones, and as a result we are not in position to fill our projected vacancies. The impact of the poor retention of 3E7X1 personnel has already started to affect our mission capability. Overall fire protection manning has dropped from 99% (Aug 99) to 85% (Dec 00). This reduction coupled with additional deployment taskings has reduced the number of firefighters available to respond to emergencies. Our first-term reenlistment rate continues to be one of the lowest in the Air Force. Current Zone A retention is 27.4 % (FY01), this downward trend has resulted in a large loss of reenlistment eligible personnel. Furthermore, the current Zone A SRB (1.5) has not reversed the decline in first-term reenlistment percentages, we must immediately increase the SRB multiple to retain sufficient

3E7X1 personnel. Furthermore, Zone B retention has continued to decline at a disturbing rate. Current Zone B retention is at 45.5% (FY01) down from 67.1% in FY96. The exodus of these fully qualified Zone B fire protection personnel is having a domino effect, as fully qualified experienced personnel are no longer available. Several commands are already experiencing difficulties filling deployment taskings with the right grade and experience level required. As a result of implementation of the EAF our authorizations and contingency requirements have increased while our assigned manning has continued to decline. This negative trend further emphasizes the importance of retaining as many fully qualified personnel as possible in Zone A and B. The retraining program from the past, coupled with poor retention rates, has also resulted in losses of our career personnel. Current Zone C retention is at 73.2% (FY01), the inability to retain a higher percentage of Zone C personnel has impacted our ability to sustain staffing of our SMSgt and CMSgt grades. Zone C personnel are not re-enlisting and we have fewer personnel available to compete for SMSgt and CMSgt promotions. Our current SMSgt staffing level is at 59%, and this level is insufficient to fill our home station or contingency taskings.

4. Fire protection AFS functional managers make this recommendation based on a review of manning levels, year group trends, year group shortages, retention trends, and force structure changes not in manpower files.

a. The SRB is very cost effective when compared to new accessions. Training cost for 68 training days of fire protection specialist (AFSC 3E731) schooling, is approximately \$14K. We believe it is far more cost effective to maintain the SRB for firefighters vice the cost of putting additional students into school to replace firefighters who separate.

b. Historical limitations and future force structure changes:

(1) In 1993, we implemented a new firefighter certification program for the fire protection career field. The enhanced education and training received by first term personnel at technical training centers and at their first duty station has significantly improved capabilities and firefighter mission support. As a result of the improved career field education and training program, these first- and second-term and career personnel have now become highly marketable in the civilian firefighter job market. The Air Force cannot compete with the pay scales and the work schedules of most civilian fire departments (i.e., average of 72 hours per week for Air Force firefighters vice less than 56 hours for most civilian fire departments). However, a larger SRB will provide increased incentive for our quality personnel to reenlist. The Air Force has invested significant resources to enhance firefighter capabilities and provide trained mission ready airmen. Now, we must take the initiative to retain a higher percentage of these fully qualified first- and second-term, and career firefighters.

(2) In 1999, the Air Force started implementing the *Expeditionary Air Force* (EAF) concept. The plan calls for “robusting” the manning at several locations with additional personnel. The Air Staff has indicated fire protection will grow approximately 293 additional enlisted, active duty, funded authorizations to support the 10 AEFs. Coupled with our poor retention rates and the increased AEF authorizations our staffing levels have significantly dropped (3-skill level staffing is at 79% and 5-skill level staffing is at 85%). We must take immediate action to improve our retention rates and increase our career field staffing (currently

550 personnel short) to capture fully-qualified reenlistment eligible firefighters. This will ensure the career field can meet current and projected home station and AEF requirements.

c. Historically, the fire protection career field was structured to provide a high percentage of three and five skill level personnel. This large pool of first term personnel provided manpower for the labor intense duties associated with the fire protection career field and gave us somewhat of a buffer to compensate for the poor retention rates of first-term personnel. However, this also resulted in promotions to Technical and Master Sergeant that exceeded our authorizations. The previous design of our career field has contributed to an overage of seven level personnel. This overage has resulted in re-training some of our best and most qualified personnel out of the career field. We recently initiated a program to closer align the fire protection career progression group (CPG) with the Air Force CPG model. This realignment of grades (176 grade changes recommended for FY00) will reduce the overall number of three and five level authorizations, and will increase the emphasis to improve the retention rate of our first-term personnel. We must take action now, to improve our retention rates to prevent our first- and second-term staffing from dropping to unacceptable levels.

d. SRBs can make a difference: Feedback from firefighters has revealed they do not necessarily reenlist “for the [SRB] money.” The small SRB factor (1.5 for Zone A, 1 for Zone B, and 0 for Zone C) is not enough for most personnel to change their career decisions. However, a larger SRB factor would show them that they are needed and the Air Force cares enough to think of them – the *perception* that the SRB provides is that “We take care of our own” is as valuable as the actual monetary gain. People will reenlist to be part of a team that cares about them and provides tangible proof of it.

5. HQ AFCESA/CEXF POC is CMSgt Carl Glover, DSN 523-6112.

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BRUCE F. MC CONNELL, Col, USAF
Director of Contingency Support

cc:
HQ USAF/ILEX